

HABS No. VA-273

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(Brubaker House)
Page House
Williamsburg
James City County
Virginia

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORIC AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Virginia

Historic American Buildings Survey

Prepared by Washington Office

PAGE HOUSE
Williamsburg, James City County, Virginia

Owner: Williamsburg Restoration (formerly the Misses Cora and Estelle Smith)

Date of erection: c. 1725

Condition: Good, not restored.

Description:

This is one of the best of the early smaller houses of Williamsburg and fortunately has been little changed since it was built. The principal modernization lies in the addition of a porch and a large dormer over it containing a door to the porch roof.

The building is a story and a half high with a steep gable roof. It is L-shaped in plan, the wing roof intersecting with the main roof. The chimneys have an unusual placement in the rear wall, coming up against the back slope of the gable. This brings the fireplaces in the low side wall of the rooms, but in the north room the intersecting gable gives full head room. The external walls are covered with old beaded weatherboarding, and the roof is shingled. The old sash remains in most of the downstairs windows and is nine-over-nine lights with wide muntins and old hand-blown glass. One light has an inscription dated 1732, and another a drawing of a full-rigged ship made by the brother of the former owners, Misses Cora and Estelle Smith.

The interior is notable particularly for its fine staircase, perhaps the most elaborate example in any Virginia house less than a mansion. It ascends in the central hall in a long flight against the north wall, three steps between the landings and a short return flight. The treads are broad and the rise low. There are three balusters to a tread. They are unusual for the richness, delicacy, and irregularity of their turnings. The handrail eases into a semivolute at the terminal newel but otherwise is received against the posts rather than ramping over them. The stair ends have brackets carved with scrolls and flowers. The interstices are pierced, and in the lower run these openings light the basement stair. The hall has a paneled dado, which continues up the stair, and ramps up the risers between the landings in a curious double scroll. There is one room on each side of the hall, both of which have original cornices, dados, mantels, and doors. The latter are six-paneled with eared architraves. The dados were originally plaster with a wood chair rail, but in the south room the space below was filled in with paneling during the Georgian period. The

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mantels are very large and are formed by eared architraves supporting pulvinated friezes and cornice shelves. The scale of the mantels is unusually fine. The house contains much fine, well maintained, early furniture.

In the yard is an early brick kitchen building from which the meals in the house are still served.

Reference: Virginia Guide.

Author:

Thomas I. Waterman

Date:

5/17/41

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